

THE DECEMBER MAGAZINES.

From T. B. Peterson & Brothers and from Turner & Co. we have received the December number of Harper's Magazine, which presents the following list of articles:— "The Brooklyn Navy Yard," W. F. G. Shanks, with fourteen illustrations; "Pio Nono and His Councilors," Lyman Abbott, with ten illustrations; "Life in Brittany," George M. Towle, with four illustrations; "A Vigil," S. S. Conant; "Frederick the Great," with eight illustrations; "The Rock of the Legion of Honor" (concluded), by the author of "On the Heights," "The Name," Henry Abbey, "Bomby and the Parses," G. Conable, with nine illustrations; "Song of Fire," Thomas Dunn English, with two illustrations; "Investing Nature into a Disclosure of Her Secrets," Jacob Abbott, with four illustrations; "Anteros," by the author of "Guy Livingstone," etc.; "The Sacred Flora" (concluded), M. D. Conway; "Under the Rose," L. P. Lippincott; "Collected by a Valentinian," Mrs. R. H. Stoddard; "Blockade Running," W. K. Hooper; "What Did Miss Darrington See?" Emma B. Cobb; "Matches," Laura M. Doolittle; "Orange Blossoms and Nightshade," Justin McCarthy; "Editor's Easy Chair," "Editor's Literary Record," "Editor's Scientific Record," "Editor's Historical Record," "Editor's Drawer."

From "Life in Brittany," by George M. Towle, we take this description of marriage customs among the Bretons:—

Mariages de convenance are customary not only among the higher and aristocratic classes, but extend as well to the lowest peasantry. Property is, among all, the great thing desired; the peasant has at least some trifling pittance laid by, with parts of which he intends to endow his children when they marry. There is the same diplomatic negotiation among them, when a marriage is to be arranged, as takes place in the upper circles. Marriages of the "commercial" sort are, however, not so general among the peasants as among their social betters. The parties immediately concerned are more frequently consulted as to their inclinations. The first move is made after a preference has been manifested among the young men themselves. A young man sees a lass who pleases him. He makes certain advances rather bashfully; she responds by tokens equally shy. It comes to be generally understood in the village that Jacques and Nannine will "make a match"—if they can. Then occurs a remarkable event. There is in Brittany a curious superstition—or rather a superstitious tradition—about tailors. It is derived from some ancient legend which has endowed the village tailor with a peculiar sacredness and reverence. The tailor (in default of a notary) is called upon to settle upon a marriage negotiation with the priest, and to advise the good folk in all domestic or social difficulties. His peculiar prerogative is to negotiate marriages. The young man who is taken with the passion that comes in time to all finds in him a trusty adviser, engages him to arrange a marriage with the damsel's parents, and to vicariously "pop the question." There is a Breton saying that the tailor could, and he would, "marry a Turk to a Jewess." Another diplomat in marriages, the tailor's rival, is he who is called the "marrying beggar," who has similar prerogatives in this matter. The tailor, when he enters upon a marriage negotiation, carries with him, as a symbol of his office and hint of his errand, a broomstick (in low Breton called "baz-ealan"), making the object of his visit clearly known to all concerned. For his services he receives an invitation to the wedding feast, and presents of clothes and money. The bride is always fain to give him a pair of stockings with yellow rims, sometimes a yellow stocking for one foot, a red one for the other. The tailor, according to the tradition, not so favorable to him, must remain a bachelor—it is a disgrace to parents to marry their daughter to him. He is the confidant both of the parents and of the lovers, and is consequently profound in all the domestic and interesting secrets of the neighborhood. He is the universal judge of the scandals; he makes it a point to keep his mouth tight while his ears are open—and so is a mentor to all. When the tailor has brought the parents of the two lovers together, there ensues an animated bargaining about the dowries. It is a shrewd, mercantile negotiation, usually, with the mediation of the tailor, ending in a treaty mutually satisfactory. Once in accord, the parties proceed to seal the contract by drinking as much of the best wine to be had as each can master; afterwards setting themselves about the table and smoking the pipe of peace, alliance, and concord. The lass who is the subject of discourse is perhaps listening, ears all agape; flutters with the momentary doubtfulness; goes wild with joy over the happy conclusion. Afterwards both families meet at the cabaret and formally sign the contract, which the tailor has drawn up in true legal shape; adjoining to the farms of each family to inspect the property, and to exhibit the substantial evidences that the dowry promised will be forthcoming.

CURE FOR OBESITY.—Mr. Schindler is the latest addition to the list of persons who have undertaken the trial and cure of excessive fatness in the human race—this condition being considered by him as a disturbance of the animal economy, in consequence of which the carbon taken in is accumulated in the form of fat. Diet and exercise, as might be expected, constitute the basis of his treatment. As in the method of Mr. Banting, which some years ago was so much in vogue, the diet advised for fat persons consists of food containing a large percentage of nitrogen, to which some vegetables without starch, and cooked fruit, are to be added, for the purpose of moderating the excitement due to animal nutrition. This diet is to be varied, according as individuals are of a sanguine or lymphatic temperament. The use of certain wines is permitted; beer is, however, entirely forbidden. Coffee and tea are allowed, with a little sugar as possible. Cheese, potatoes, rice, beans, peas, maize, macaroni, tapioca, arrow-root, and soups are not allowed. The use of sulphate of soda is recommended, as moderating the transformation of nitrogenous materials and stimulating the oxidation of fat; and the use of mineral waters containing the sulphate of soda in solution is considered of the greatest importance in this respect. The waters of Mineral Spring are especially rich in this salt, are stated to have usually the most happy effect. Their use, together with that of some alkaline pills, and a strict adherence to the conditions above-mentioned, caused a decrease in weight of from twenty-five to sixty pounds in different individuals in the course of a few weeks.

LUMBER.

1870 SPRUCE JOIST, 1870

1870 SEASONED CLEAR PINE, 1870

1870 FLORIDA FLOORING, 1870

1870 WALNUT BOARDS AND PLANK, 1870

1870 UNDERTAKERS' LUMBER, 1870

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The rose is also associated with an ancient charm once universal in Germany, still frequent in Swabia and Westphalia, against nose-bleeding, and indeed all kinds of hemorrhages. This formula in Westphalia runs thus:—"Abek, Wabek, Fabek; in Christ's garden stand three red roses—one for the good God, the other for God's blood, the third for the angel Gabriel; blood, I pray you cease to flow!" In Swabia it is said:—"On our Lord Jesus' grave spring three roses—the first is Hope, the second Patience, the third God's Will; blood, I pray you be still! Sometimes again it is, "In God's garden bloom three roses—Blood-drop, Blood-stop, and Blood-still," etc. These runes have curious modifications. In St. Louis, Missouri, a German named Streger last year committed murder, and afterwards suicide. In his room was found the following charm against hemorrhage:—"At the grave of Christ bloom three flowers—the first is Jugend, the second is Tugend, the third is Gubel" (Ubel). "Repeat three times, and the blood will cease to flow." I have somewhere met with a legend that the thorn-crown of Christ was made from rose-brier, and that the drops of blood that started under it and fell to the ground blossomed to roses; the fable has been recalled to me, though I cannot trace it, by the felicitous lines of the most gifted American poetess (Mrs. Howe):—"Men saw the thorns on Jesus' brow, But angels saw the roses."

A similar idea pervades the story of "Dornroschen," known to English readers as "The Sleeping Beauty," or "Rose-bud," who, if not remembered, sleeps in a palace surrounded by formidable thorn-thickets, in which all who approached perished save the true prince, to whom the thorns were all roses, through which he passed with ease. There is, by-the-way, in the same legend, as it originally appears in the Edda of Snemund, a curious reminiscence of the Oriental symbolism which connected the rose with silence and sleep. When Sigurd there enters the castle and awakes Brynhilde, she tells the story of her trance in these words:—"Two kings contended; one high Hialmgunner, and he was old but of mickle might, and Odin had promised him the victory. I fell him in fight; but Odin struck my head with the sleepy-thorn, and said I should never be again victorious, and should be hereafter wedded."—Turner & Co. send us the December numbers of Arthur's Home Magazine (which has numerous illustrations, fashion plates, and a pleasing variety of reading matter) and The Children's Hour, which is full of attractive short stories, verses, and pictures that will please the little people.

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